

Tuesday, February 15, 2005

11:47 AM

A-Moral/The Evil I am trying to understand, and prevent

[This is an attempt at relatively fast transcription of notes, written at night on 2-12-05, with a minimum of elaboration]

MGE pointed out tonight that my files on morality and “how evil gets done” really focus on a narrower form of wrong-doing than is implied by the “evil” as it is commonly used, which can refer to an extremely broad range of behavior. He asks, “what does ‘evil’ mean to you?” in these analyses. I confirm his impression that I am almost always addressing: the massacre of civilians, by nuclear weapons or otherwise.

So my question, “How does evil get done?” usually translates to the question: How does mass killing of civilians get done?”

[already I’ve reverted to reflections suggested by my notes. For the next 15 minutes or so, I’m just going to transcribe my notes:

MGE points out: My moral obsession is: How does [Evil: read] mass killing of civilians get done?

The origin, and the main focus, of this concern is my awareness, since 1959, of plans and preparations in America for multi-genocide, the extermination of a multitude of ethnic groups in the Soviet Union and surrounding territories in the Northern Hemisphere, by nuclear weapons, to be initiated by the US under a wide variety of possible circumstances. SIOP-62 (and even the radically-reduced annihilation contemplated in my draft guidance for SIOP-63) is the archetype of such planning and operational preparation, which still exists.

For forty years I have studied the motivations and processes of “lesser” crimes against humanity and humanity that have actually occurred, in order to understand how full plans and preparations for this greatest prospective crime came into being, at the hands and minds of Americans, so as to answer: How can it be averted?

[My concern is not, as Michael inferred, exclusively (though mainly) with unjustified killing of civilians.¹ It is also with understanding, in order to prevent, unjustified killing of combatants. E.g., in an aggressive war. Or in the unjustified continuation of a war: as in World War I (WWI) (after the fall of 1914!), the Civil War after Gettysburg (from the South’s point of view), Vietnam after, at the latest, Tet 1968. To recognize this killing as unjustified—in the absence of serious efforts to stop hostilities—is to cover most killing in warfare, even of armed combatants, even when one side is initially acting in legitimate self-defense against aggression.

See, for example, *all* the killing by Iraqi troops in the invasion of Iran; and the killing by Iranian troops in a stalemated war after the invasion had been repelled. Or: *all* killing by

US troops and airmen (or earlier, French, or Japanese) in Vietnam, including killing of armed combatants, from 1961 on, in the light of the illegitimacy of our “intervention.” And without having yet recognized the latter implications of our secret history there, I perceived all our further killing of Vietnamese, armed and unarmed, as unjustified, illegitimate, or mass murder, by mid-1969, on the grounds both of firmly-established stalemate and of the mass desire of South Vietnamese to see the fighting over on any terms.]

Thus the issue is: *unjustified*, organized, mass killing.

This would include, I believe, *all* mass, deliberate killing of unarmed civilians, people who are not immediately threatening physical harm: either on the ground or from the air. (This allows for use of lethal force in immediate defense of self or others).

I am saying that massacre—lethal physical violence against large numbers of unarmed civilians—is *always* unjustified. I know of not a single instance where such a massacre has been carried out that can retrospectively be justified by its results, or by its supposed “necessity” “under the circumstances” or lack of alternatives. Reasons for it (beyond a simple appeal to emotion, revenge, hatred or fear) are often given at the time, but these have never proven sound or compelling, nor the effects sought, even if obtained (such as mass flight--ethnic cleansing--or an intimidated population) such as to justify the killing.

Arguments can and have been made to justify, in certain circumstances, virtually every harmful activity that has ever been done or conceived. I am saying that in the case of massacre (a very common action, especially when bombing of civilians is included) these arguments have always been unsound or fallacious, not merely self-serving. Deliberate targeting and killing of unarmed civilians should, I maintain, always be regarded as murder, mass murder: forbidden by law and morality, in all circumstances whatever, by whatever means, by whomever: to be condemned universally, and punished by strong sanctions.

That covers US and UK “area bombing” of cities in World War II—nearly all British bombing in Europe, much US bombing in Europe from February, 1945, and all US bombing in Japan after March 10, 1945. It also covers, after five months of murderous firebombing of Japanese civilians (perhaps 800,000 deaths) the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

It also covers—as unjustified mass killing of civilians--*most*¹ allegedly “inadvertent” killing of civilians involved in air attacks purportedly aiming at military targets. In most though not all such cases, e.g. in South Vietnam, the killing of civilians, even if allegedly undesired, is “disproportionate” to any military advantage gained by the attacks (even if they do destroy the military target). And commonly (just as in nuclear targeting in the Fifties and Sixties) the prospective or actual killing of civilians is secretly regarded as a “bonus” effect, if it is not secretly the primary objective. See, for example, the recent total destruction of the “rebel” city of Falluja, which contained at the time far

¹ Here some independent judgment of circumstances is required.

more civilian inhabitants (even after large-scale flight) than “insurgents.” Reports quoted military officers as saying that this would send an effective message to other cities that “harbored” insurgents.

The word “evil” may not, after all, be helpful in my discussion, since it so often covers types of alleged wrongdoing (such as heresy or “unbelief”, or “sins” like adultery or homosexuality) that I would not even regard as crimes; and even worse, because it is commonly used to identify actions or persons to whom it is acceptable, or obligatory, to annihilate, to counter with actions that would themselves otherwise be “evil.”

In other words, the term is not generally used, as I would prefer, to denote a kind of action that should not be used under any circumstances, even against “evil persons” (if such exist) or in response to “evil actions” (which I would say do exist).ⁱⁱ That would include (not exhaustively):

--massacre

--genocide

--bombing of civilians: cities and towns

--nuclear war, on any scale.

That list is not so obvious that it has no significant content. The last two items, far from being universally seen as “evil,” cover monumental practices or plans, celebrated and hardly even controversial, of the American government over the last sixty years.

Should torture and assassination be included?

Both of these have been publicly and officially endorsed, even as fairly widespread practices, by the Israeli government for many years. And now, perhaps with some direct Israeli influence at high levels, by the American government. And the case to be made for them is plausible to a large part, perhaps the majority, of the American public. (See the article by Jane Mayer in the current New Yorker, which I read this morning. She quotes John Yoo, currently a Berkeley law professor, who provided the legal rationale for this for President Bush, as judging that the recent election, and the relatively mild criticism of Alberto Gonzales in his successful confirmation hearings, as amounting to a national referendum on the subject in which the public can be held to have accepted the practices: specifically of torture and “rendition” to torture states, which has also resulted in deaths and “disappearances” as in Latin American countries with CIA involvement.

[1:30 PM Almost two hours was spent “transcribing” one legal-sized page of notes. Not what I had in mind. Let’s see what I can do in the next hour. The point of these editorial notes is to warn the reader of the sketchy nature of the notes to follow—if I can make myself do this:

from 2-13-05: now 2-15-05, 1:51 PM:

US first-use (FU) plans are plans for crimes against humanity (see p. 9, No-First-Use SIPRIⁱⁱⁱ) in the eyes of most UN members. And in most cases, massive war crimes.

Preparations and plans for these involve a conspiracy to commit massive war crimes and horrendous crimes against humanity: at a time and place and under circumstances uncertain: nevertheless, preparation to commit mass murder.

The World Court opinion held such attacks to be illegal, “unless”, perhaps, necessary to preserve the integrity, independence, or survival of a nation. (paraphrase) This vast loophole allows the possible legality of past NATO war plans, potentially destructive to civilization in the Northern Hemisphere.

Would it not also allow the nuclear plans of: Pakistan? Israel? Preemptive plans by India, or Russia, or the US?

Deterrent plans for nuclear attack in response to BW or CW attack.

But above all: the World Court loophole would allow the preemptive use of the US or Russian SIOP: plans for the greatest crimes against humanity in human history.

These amount to hemispheric Doomsday Machines. The US version differs from Kahn’s hypothetical Doomsday Machine only in not being literally and designedly automatic, free from human decision: but since multiple delegation and role for false alarms from fallible warning systems is allowed, it allows for ‘bureaucratic automaticity,’ even though (possibly low-level) human decision-making and judgment is in the loop.

This lack of centralized control or veto over nuclear initiatives or “response” extends to the continuous successful resistance of the US Navy to putting Permissive Action Links (PAL’s, which would prevent firing unless by authenticated orders of higher authority) on strategic missiles on Navy submarines. Thus, *each* Trident submarine on patrol is, in terms of alert strategic missiles, the third largest nuclear entity in the world. (Not to worry: an insubordinate, mad, or misled submarine captain—as in the movie *Crimson Tide*—could not by himself cause nuclear winter, with only 172 warheads. But he could kill about 100 million people.²

² Herbert York, in his Livermore essay on the requirements of Minimum Deterrence, calculates that it would take about 100 KT warheads (each equivalent to 100,000 tons of TNT, or about five Nagasaki bombs), or at most 200, to kill 60 million people. This relates to his hypothetical question: Suppose we felt that no single individual political leader should possess the destructive power to kill quickly more than the total deaths of World War II, about 60 million people: how many 100 KT warheads (typical of a MIRVd missile) would that imply, as a ceiling? Answer: 100-200.

We have several Trident submarines on patrol continuously (four? Seven? We have about 14 Tridents, each with nearly 200 warheads).

He could kill them by mistake, as depicted in the movie. The captain, played by Gene Hackman, plausibly believes he has received a legitimate execute order—if such an order can be conceived as “legitimate,” which goes unquestioned within the US defense establishment and elite circles—even though the supposed authentication code has been interrupted. Moreover, the incident to which he believes the order is responding, a Russian attempt at missile launch, in fact constitutes actions of Russian rebels, not the government).

As the movie correctly depicts, such a judgment is, by Navy protocol, supposed to be confirmed by a second officer; but as the movie also realistically represents (as my own studies in the Pacific Command discovered) that “two-man” rule can easily be overridden, and almost surely would be under extreme circumstances.

The assurance given to audiences at the close of the movie, that PALs were about to be installed on Navy submarines soon after release of the movie, was and is false.

Meanwhile, the Soviet “SIOP” model, incorporating the “Dead Hand”, is literally automatized (in response to publicity about US decapitation plans), in the event of an explosion on Moscow. (Which could be the product of Chechnyan terrorists or others: giving Al Qaeda or Aum Shinrikyo a trigger on Russian strategic forces).

Moreover, Khrushchev, in the Cuban Missile Crisis, delegated authority to launch tactical missiles on Cuba to his Soviet commanders there. If the US—ignorant then and for a generation later of the existence of tactical nuclear warheads on Cuba and of the delegation order—had executed its plans for invading Cuba 48 hours after Robert Kennedy’s ultimatum to Dobrynin (I was marginally involved in that planning), it would “inevitably”, in Secretary of Defense McNamara’s judgment, have led to the execution of the US SIOP (still essentially SIOP-62, not my stripped-down model), leading to nuclear winter and the end of civilized life in the Northern Hemisphere and possibly to global extinction. (To add to my Forrest Gump career: the Soviet missiles were on Cuba in significant part because of boasts of US strategic superiority which I drafted in 1961 for Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric. But I didn’t ask Khrushchev to delegate nuclear authority to Soviet local commanders anywhere.)

Neither of these, by design, destroys all life in the Southern Hemisphere, like Khan’s machine. But if either, or both, carries out its preplanned option for burning all cities in the other’s homeland, the resulting soot—scientists outside governments noticed only in 1983) could cause nuclear winter not only in the Northern hemisphere but could change equatorial wind patterns so as to allow clouds and radioactive fallout to migrate to the South and blot out sunlight over the whole globe, multiplying casualties by billions and possibly leading to human extinction (essentially the same way the dinosaurs went: though that was not by dinosaur hands, since they lacked large brains and opposable thumbs).

Meanwhile, what *are* the French plans? As of now, they do not have enough warheads to cause nuclear winter, which requires perhaps 1000 warheads on cities. Only two countries can now achieve this (each has more than ten times the minimal requirements for hemispheric or perhaps global nuclear winter). But if nuclear testing resumes (likely under Bush) the French will develop and test warheads with which to MIRV their missiles, as will the Chinese, so there would soon be four countries with “nuclear winter capability,” the power, perhaps, to end life on earth. Germany and Japan could achieve that status in a year or two when they chose to join this club.

What are the Israeli plans? How do they look, from the point of view of crimes against humanity? (They are not all planned for tactical targets in the desert).

Pakistani?

There is a rather urgent interest—not only in the targeted countries--in knowing any and all of these plans—starting with US, UK and Russian—but in not one are the plans known, probably, to a single member of their legislatures (Senator Robert Kerrey made several unsuccessful efforts to be briefed on targeting, as a member of the Intelligence Oversight Committee), nor to most high-level civilian or military officials: let alone the publics that pay for the deployments and planning, nor of the targeted countries or their neutral neighbors who are in danger of extermination from fallout.

END NOTES

ⁱ Is there such a thing as “justified”—or non-criminal, non-evil—killing of civilians? This is not just a terminological issue. The answer, I would say, is yes, in the following, narrow sense. In the course of self-defense, or common defense, against aggression, some number of civilians might be killed in “crossfire” or as the result of justified attacks on important military targets, without these deaths being reasonably regarded as murder or criminal in the sense meant here.

In nearly all cases of civilian deaths, this excuse is offered, usually without any examination of its appropriateness. How important to the military defense is this military target system, compared to the number of civilian deaths? How many deaths were anticipated and how many inflicted? How much care, if any, was taken to minimize the number of “undesired” civilian casualties? Any at all? (Often not). Were alternative measures considered that would have led to fewer or no civilian casualties, though at some higher cost in friendly casualties or effectiveness?

(In bombing in the Kosovo-Serbia operations, NATO—mainly US—air forces were ordered to bomb from high altitude, assuring significant civilian deaths from inaccuracy, so as to minimize casualties for NATO airmen (which were, in fact, kept to zero, at the cost of great civilian losses. One could argue that if military operations are justified at all—especially, as in this case, to protect Kosovo civilians—the attackers should accept the risk of military casualties (up to some level, higher than zero!) to minimize or avert civilian deaths. As a former Marine, I would say that I not only accepted that ethic—risk military lives (mine and my troops) to save civilians, even “enemy”—but prized it.

But in this case, it was not the US airmen who demanded this zero-casualty approach but American policy-makers (Clinton and his aides) who imposed it, on the calculation that an operation that looked questionable in terms of legality and US interest would not have sufficient US domestic support long enough if it involved any sizeable number of US casualties, or perhaps any at all. (Our intervention in Somalia, equally questionable on both grounds, had been terminated abruptly after popular reaction to 18 US deaths).

A zero-casualty approach—associated in particular with controversial imperial interventions—assures use of indiscriminate US firepower, not only from bombers but from helicopter gunships, artillery and automatic weapons with ground troops, that assures high civilian casualties in urban areas. This approach was used in the blitzkrieg against Iraq—with results approximating zero casualties (perhaps 100) and—no longer with the same effectiveness—in the occupation since.

The destruction of Falluja was a major war crime. The deaths of perhaps 100,000 Iraqi civilians from our invasion and the continuing aggressive war (“occupation”) constitutes a crime against humanity.

ⁱⁱ That is the sort of usage implied by Paul and by Peter, “Do not repay evil with evil.” That admonition against revenge, and specifically against responding to evil-doing in kind, is possibly the most important ethical principle for the reduction of reliance on massive violence and thus for ensuring the survival of life on earth that has ever been enunciated. But it is not merely honored in the breach; it is not generally honored at all. It is not generally accepted even as an aspiration, a norm. Particularly in international relations, it is openly taken for granted that evil done to us not only permits but virtually obliges us to “take the gloves off” and to respond with comparable harm, by actions that would “otherwise” be recognized as comparably, if not more, evil. It is virtually the case that “evil” is defined operationally as “that which justified the use in return, or in prevention, of inflicting extreme human suffering (even, it may be, on “innocent” victims: in the case of hostages or “collateral damage”).

I would like, somehow, to get a consensus that the latter harm is to be included under the category of “evil,” as in Paul’s admonition, not as in the latter modern usage: thus, not to be, ever, the response to other forms of evil.

ⁱⁱⁱ “The very first resolution of the UN General Assembly, adopted unanimously in 1946, set as a goal the ‘control of atomic energy *to the extent necessary to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes.*’” (emphasis

added). On November 24, 1961 [just after my draft of Gilpatric's speech was delivered in October], in Resolution 1653 (XVI), the General Assembly "by a vote of 55 to 20, with 26 abstentions, adopted a declaration stating that *the use* of nuclear weapons [note: this would appear to cover second-use or retaliation, as well as initiation: quite plausibly] was contrary to the spirit, letter and aims of the United Nations and, as such, a direct violation of the UN Charter. The resolution went to proclaim such use to be a 'crime against mankind and civilization.' The USA and other NATO countries opposed the resolution, while the USSR and its allies supported it. The US position, then spelled out, was that in the event of an aggression that could not be repulsed by conventional forces, the USA must be prepared to take whatever action with whatever weapons were appropriate."

(Clearly, there would have been many more votes supporting this resolution, not only among the 26 abstentions but among the 20, mainly NATO, voting against it, if the US had not led the opposition with great determination.)

In 1983, December 15, "one resolution, adopted by 126 votes to 17, with 6 abstentions, requested the Committee on Disarmament to commence negotiations in order to achieve agreement on an international convention prohibiting the *use or threat of use* of nuclear weapons 'under any circumstances,' while [another] resolution, passed by 95 votes to 19, with 30 abstentions, 'resolutely, unconditionally and for all time' condemned nuclear war, as well as political and military doctrines and concepts intended to provide 'legitimacy' for the first use of nuclear weapons and in general to justify the 'admissibility' of unleashing nuclear war. These resolutions were also opposed by the Western nuclear power and have remained dead letters." (emphasis added)